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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

22 November 1948

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 88

SUBJECT: Tungsten in South Korea

1. The Japanese, during their occupation of Korea, discovered and exploited large reserves of tungsten in that country. In the twelve years following 1932 production of tungsten concentrates was raised from almost nothing to a report 8,400 tons (60% WO_3) in 1944, thus elevating Korea to a position as one of the major tungsten suppliers of the world in that period. In an investigation made in 1946, technicians of the US Geological Survey estimated that about 2,600 tons of this 1944 production came from mines in northern Korea (area now held by the Soviets), and 5,800 tons came from southern Korea, now the United States zone. The Survey also reported that, in 1944, one mine in the United States zone, the Sangdong (located N. $37^{\circ} 08' 41''$, E. $128^{\circ} 50' 17''$), produced 3,965 tons of concentrates, or about 48% of the total.

2. Ore reserves of this Sangdong mine are estimated by the US Geological Survey at as much as 3,000,000 tons averaging about 1.7% WO_3 , thus indicating this deposit as one of the largest single known tungsten reserves of the world. The ore also contains bismuth. After the war the mine and the Japanese-built mill were kept operating; in 1946 an estimated 313 tons of low-grade concentrates were produced. In 1948, production was running at the rate of more or less 120 tons per month of concentrates of 61% to 63% WO_3 content. The mill is reported as being very inefficient, lacking in equipment, supplies and spare parts. It is also reported that a quantity of the ore has been sent to the United States for tests as to most efficient means of concentration, for recovery of both tungsten and bismuth. The Wah Chang Trading Corporation has been acting as selling agent, and the concentrates are offered on the open market to the highest bidder.

3. Tungsten (and bismuth) is one of the very few products which South Korea can produce and export to acquire foreign exchange.

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